

April 1, 2025

To: Senate K-16 Education Committee

Re: Senate Bill 2252

Position: For

Honorable Chair Creighton and Members of the Senate K-16 Education Committee,

The Commit Partnership, Texas 2036, and 24 supporting organizations appreciate the opportunity to submit **written testimony in support of Senate Bill 2252 (SB 2252)**. With only 46% of Texas 3rd graders reading on grade level and 43% meeting grade-level standards in math,¹ we commend the Senate’s commitment to data-driven strategies that support early learners. The 2024 NAEP results highlighted students performing at grade level have maintained steady progress but those with the most significant learning gaps continue to fall further behind, emphasizing the urgent need to address and enhance student achievement. **We commend the Senate on SB 2252 taking a bold step forward in ensuring that every Texas student has access to early literacy and numeracy progress monitoring, targeted interventions, and provide parents with the foundational support necessary for students to succeed in school life after high school.**

I. EARLY LITERACY AND NUMERACY PROGRESS MONITORING: SB 2252 ENSURES SCHOOLS AND PARENTS HAVE CRUCIAL DATA ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Texas currently lacks a consistent, statewide approach to literacy and numeracy progress monitoring in grades K-3. In SY22-23, reliable progress data for nearly 800,000 1st and 2nd graders was unavailable leaving missed opportunities for intervention with learning gaps compounding over time.² Without this information, parents are often unaware of their child’s reading gaps and school districts miss opportunities for providing additional support ahead of the 3rd grade benchmark. Additionally, 89% of voters support requiring schools to identify students struggling to read prior to 3rd grade and as early as Kindergarten.³

SB 2252 strengthens early literacy and numeracy policy by ensuring school districts utilize approved reading and numeracy screeners through effective progress monitoring at the beginning, middle, and end of each school year for K-3 students. SB 2252 further ensures timely parental notifications and school board reporting to ensure accountability and transparency in student progress. By equipping educators, families, and districts with clear, reliable data, SB 2252 guarantees intervention before gaps widen and ensures students receive the necessary support to meet grade-level expectations. **We applaud the Senate for its commitment to establishing evidence-based literacy and numeracy screeners, transparent progress monitoring and reporting, and required interventions for struggling students with at home learning support.**

¹ TEA, STAAR 2024

² PEIMS, 2023-2024 Enrollment.

³ Ragnar Research Partners, Commit Statewide Poll. (Nov. 2024).

II. EARLY LITERACY INTERVENTION: SB 2252 GUARANTEES TARGETED SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS STRUGGLING TO READ

91% of Texas voters support schools being required to provide additional supports to struggling readers early on so they can read at grade level by 3rd grade.⁴ Of 3rd grade students who did not meet grade-level reading expectations in 2019, less than 1 in 5 (or 18%) caught up in three years. Conversely, students who learn to read by 3rd grade are 4 times more likely to graduate high school.⁵ Without effective interventions, academic gaps persist and widen, making it increasingly difficult for students to succeed in later grades.

SB 2252 ensures students identified as at-risk after 2 consecutive reading screenings receive intervention through classroom teachers and interventionists until they catch up or reach 4th grade. If a district utilizes a high-quality, approved, research-based reading intervention, the district is entitled to an allotment of \$250 per student, capped at 10% of enrolled K-3 students. SB 2252 ensures that struggling readers are provided with effective, structured interventions designed to improve phonemic awareness, vocabulary, reading comprehension, and fluency. As nationally targeted tutoring sessions have emerged as an effective way to address student’s reading problems”⁶, **we appreciate the aligned evidence-based focus on the science of reading and ensured delivery by trained educators and interventionists with funding support for districts, maximizing the likelihood of student success.**

III. PARENTAL SUPPORT AND HOME LEARNING RESOURCES: SB 2252 EMPOWERS FAMILIES TO SUPPORT READING DEVELOPMENT

Strong parental engagement is a key driver of student success. SB 2252 establishes resources to assist parents in supporting their child’s reading development at home, including:

- Providing families with **timely and actionable literacy progress reports.**
- Equipping parents with **research-based tools and strategies to reinforce foundational reading skills.**
- **Expanding early childhood parental support programs** to promote kindergarten readiness and literacy development before students enter the K-12 system.
- **Providing \$750 to parents for tutoring services** if their student fails the 3rd grade STAAR reading test.

We applaud the commitment to strong parental engagement by equipping families with timely literacy progress reports, research-based tools, and expanded early childhood support programs to help close early literacy gaps before they widen.

IV. READING AND MATH ACADEMIES: SB 2252 CREATES IMPROVEMENTS TO READING AND MATH ACADEMIES WITH FUNDING TO SUPPORT DISTRICTS

⁴ Ragnar Research Partners, Commit Statewide Poll. (Nov. 2024).

⁵ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2012). Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation.

⁶ Novic, S. & Loeb S. (2024). Lessons from the Early Literacy Tutoring Landscape. Kappan.

Teacher efficacy is the most significant in-school factor affecting student success.⁷ HB 3 (86R) created reading and math academies to strengthen K-3 literacy and numeracy support and place effective educators in early-grade classrooms. HB 1605 (2023) further advanced math and literacy by creating state-owned textbooks with teacher training, vocabulary and book lists, and eliminating ‘three cueing’ in reading instruction. While progress has been made, Texas has yet to fully implement national best practices, and policies should be strengthened to better support math achievement. Only 36% of elementary and middle school principals in Texas report that all or most all their math teachers demonstrate deep knowledge of math instruction, and only 41% have a deep knowledge of math.⁸

SB 2252 builds on the commitment of HB 3 and HB 1605 by ensuring our educators are ready to teach foundational academic reading and math skills through the expansion of reading and math academies to train interventionists in evidence-based practices that enhance student outcomes while also removing the academies’ expiration. **We appreciate the continued investment in these evidence-based academies and the newly allocated funding to support teachers attending them outside their contract hours.**

V. **TARGETED FUNDING: SB 2252 EXPANDS EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS**

SB 2252 makes strategic investments in programs proven to accelerate learning and address early literacy deficits, including:

- **Expanding the Early Education Allotment (EEA):** Additional funding for K-3 students who are economically disadvantaged or emergent bilingual, ensures critical literacy and numeracy supports reach the students who need them most. **We appreciate the efforts to increase the Early Education Allotment and respectfully suggest amending language so that prekindergarten students are eligible to generate the .1 EEA weight in addition to the increased funding already included in the legislation. Including prekindergarten students in the EEA can strengthen access to high-quality early education and provide school systems with more resources to support schools’ ability to offer high-quality Pre-K and implement evidence-based acceleration strategies before 3rd grade.**
- **Enhancing the Additional Days School Year (ADSY) Program:** Quality extended school calendars can mitigate learning loss and accelerate student outcomes. ADSY campuses show improved proficiency rates for students furthest behind with the most academic gains among those who attended 25+ additional days. For example, these students saw a dramatic 17%-point increase in meeting grade level STAAR math from 2022 to 2023 compared to their non-ADSY peers.⁹ **To scale similar outcomes across the state, we appreciate the adjustment to the ADSY base calendar requirement to 175 days, expansion of the program to middle schools, and additional formula funds for programs with additional days that show the greatest return on investment.¹⁰**
- **Resource Campus:** Improving low-performing schools is critically important to Texas’ economic prosperity. Resource Campuses provide full-scope support for chronically underperforming campuses that implement a

⁷ Opper, Isaac M. (2019). *Teachers Matter: Understanding Teachers’ Impact on Student Achievement*. RAND.

⁸ Rand, *Elementary and Middle School Opportunity Structures That Factor into Students’ Math Learning Findings from the American Mathematics Educator Study*, (2024).

⁹ TEA PEIMS data; STAAR 2022-23.

¹⁰ Commit Analysis and adapted from TEA Materials.

robust turnaround framework. When 26 campuses in North Texas implemented this type of framework, the proportion of F-rated campuses decreased from 69% to 8%, while A- and B-rated campuses increased from 0% to 50%.¹¹ **By modifying the Resource Campus criteria without sacrificing the fidelity of the model, Texas can make this program more accessible and spur dramatic improvements.**

VI. CLOSING

We commend the Senate’s commitment to strengthening early education policy and supporting all Texas students to be equipped with the foundational skills necessary for long-term success. When adults focus on foundational academic years before 3rd grade, we support more students with a strong academic start, catch up those who fall behind early on, and ultimately prepare more students for success following high school graduation. **SB 2252 presents a bold, evidence-based approach to identifying academic struggles early, intervening effectively, and empowering educators and families with the tools they need to support student learning. We appreciate the leadership’s dedication to supporting academic success for our youngest learners. We look forward to continued partnership in advancing SB 2252 and securing a brighter future for Texas by prioritizing early literacy and numeracy achievement.**

Gratefully,

Kate Greer
 Managing Director, Policy and State Coalition
 The Commit Partnership

Gabe Grantham
 Policy Advisor
 Texas 2036

Supporting Organizations:



¹¹ Commit Analysis of TEA Accountability Scores.